



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Department of Consumer Affairs
"Enriching Lives"

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Nice Kids Selling Candy...Are They Working For a Scam Artist?

As the weather warms up, you might see kids selling candy at your local supermarket, gas station, shopping center, or even knocking on your door. "Those cute kids selling candy, hoping to earn a trip to Disney World or just trying to make extra money may be working for a scam artist," says Pastor Herrera, Jr., Director of the County of Los Angeles Department of Consumer Affairs.

Not all kids selling candy are working for crooks. Many are legitimately raising money for their school, church, or youth group. But some are unwittingly working for scam artists. Here's how it works. The kids answer an advertisement stating they can earn up to \$250 a day. They are taken miles away from their homes and dropped off in an unfamiliar neighborhood. They go door to door to sell candy or are taken to a shopping center. The children are usually not supervised by an adult. They may be left behind if they wander away or the driver can't find them. Many times, they don't get paid.

Such is the case with Kevin, a 14 year old boy who was a victim of the candy sales scam. He and three other boys were left alone for hours on a busy street corner in Los Angeles. Kevin was instructed to say he was selling candy for his church's choir. Although the boys worked from 10am to 10pm, they didn't get paid.

La France Toliver, a Pasadena resident, shares her experience. "I've noticed those kids at the shopping centers. I've even bought candy from them. Then I recognized the same kids at different locations over time. They're working the city, going from one location to another. The

kids are always polite but persistent. I asked one of them, 'Where are you from?' The boy told me he was from Monrovia. That's a couple of cities away from Pasadena. These kids are too well versed to be working a fundraiser. They are being taught to lie and work the system."

Charities must register with the California Attorney Generals', Charitable Trust Division. They may also have to register with the city they are fundraising in. To protect yourself, ask to see the charity's registration documents and information card before making a purchase. Remember too, that children fundraising for their church or high school usually stay within their own community. Children are required by law to be supervised by an adult. If they don't meet these requirements, notify the police.

Some legitimate charities do hire young people to sell merchandise. You can protect your child by doing the following:

- Ask the supervisor to show you the charity's registration and information card.
- Ask where your child is being taken and how and when they will get back home.
- Ask when your child will be paid.
- Write down the license plate number of the vehicle they will be riding in, as well as the name and description of the driver. Make sure your child has this information too and keeps it with him while fundraising.
- Tell your child to call the police if the driver leaves them alone for long periods of time or if they get lost.
- Write down the days and hours they work. The company has to pay them minimum wage, not just commission.

The Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs deals with this and other consumer concerns such as: sales transactions, credit, automobiles, landlord/tenant, identity theft and more. The Department's services are free to Los Angeles County residents. For more information please call (800) 593-8222 or visit us online at lacountydca.info

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